

Academy of South Indian Music (UK)

BHARATHANATYAM EXAMINATIONS SYLLABUS

FOREWORD

Bharatanatyam originated many centuries ago in the temples of Tamil Nadu in South India. It is known for its strong lines that make geometric and symmetrical shapes as well as its turn-out position by which it is commonly recognised. The dance form is embellished with intricately expressive hand gestures and elaborate facial expressions that lend to the story-telling aspect of this style.

The *mārgam*, which is the format of a traditional Bharatanatyam presentation, was formalised by the Tanjore Quartet in the second half of the eighteenth century. Traditionally, the training programme for Bharatanatyam dancers has been organised around this *mārgam*. Bharatanatyam dancers, to this day, generally follow this format in a traditional presentation. The syllabus is designed closely to reflect traditional teaching whilst considering the needs and experiences of present-day students worldwide.

Students of classical Indian dance, other than those in India, are in an environment that may not necessarily complement their experience of Bharatanatyam training. This syllabus, therefore, is based on the investing of time and effort in the early Grades, to create the necessary physical and cultural infrastructure for the dancer in training.

The syllabus also accommodates some changes in the traditional learning progression of dance material. It promotes holistic dance experience at the initial stages, even before each aspect of the physical training has been mastered. Students are also encouraged to see dance performances in order to gain a cultural and critical understanding, and a lively interest in Bharatanatyam and in the wider horizons of dance.

The syllabus provides a structure equally suited to students of any of the different *bāṇis* of Bharatanatyam, without favouring one over another.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND GENERAL INFORMATION

AGE LIMITS

The examination has no lower or upper age limit, but is recommended for those between the ages of six and eight.

GENDER DISTINCTIONS

The examination does not require the dancer to make a gender specific presentation. Males and females can be presented together.

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

The student is responsible for the musical accompaniment in a recorded format.

DRESS REQUIREMENTS

There are no marks for grooming for the Primary Class Examination; it is considered an essential aspect of training, giving poise and confidence. The following are expected:

- Candidates should be suitably dressed in clothes that enable the examiner to see the dance and allow the candidate to perform without distraction.
- Females should wear a suitably tailored *salwār* or *curidār kamīz*.
- Males should wear a suitably tailored *kurtā pyjāma*.

- All candidates should have their waist firmly bound.
- Hair should be pinned away from the face and, if necessary, drawn back in a single plait or bun. A long plait should be secured at the back to prevent its movement distracting from the dance.
- No dance costumes or jewellery should be worn.
- Ankle bells are optional.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is carried out by means of a practical demonstration of the knowledge, understanding and skills required.

The examination is divided into Sections and each Section is composed of several components, which are separately assessed and aggregated to give the total out of 100. This reflects the need to ensure competence across a wide range of components.

Results are indicated using the following attainment bands:

GRADE	MARKS
Distinction	80-100 marks
Merit	65-79 marks
Pass	50-64 marks
Not Attained	0-49 marks

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Please see the ASIM Equality and Diversity Policy on the ASIM website for full information.

EXAMINATION RE-TAKES

Candidates who are not successful may not re-take the examination until 3 months after the original examination.

Grade 1

Namaskaram

- Proper way to do the Namaskaram (Namaskar) and the meaning behind that

Warm-Up Exercises (Beginner Level)

- Any exercises taught by your instructor to stretch and condition the body before all practice sessions and performance

Terminology

- Namaskaram - A Bharatnatyam dancer starts and ends every session of dancing with Namaskar (obedience). Dancer seeks blessings and permission from Mother Earth to stomp on her during the dance. The dancer pays respect to God (Nataraja), Teacher (Guru), and Audience.
- Attami - Refers to the neck movements.
- Samam (Samapadam) - Feet together and standing straight.
- Araimandi (Ardhamandala) - Is a basic posture of the body in Bharatnatyam in which the body should be straight, legs bent at the knee, and toes facing sideways.
- Muzhumandi (Mandala) - The torso should be straight while sitting down on the toes of the two feet.

Adavus

- Tatta Adavu – Thaiya – Tai - striking the floor with sole of the feet
- Natta Adavu – Taiyum Tattat Taiyum Tam - stretching the leg and striking with heels
- Kattu Adavu
- Mettu Adavu
- Dhi thi thei - variations

Mudras

- One of the most striking features of Indian Classical Dance is the use of hand gestures. Speaking in dance via gestures, rather than orally, in order to visually convey outer events or things, as well as inner feelings, two classifications of specific traditional 'MUDRA' (hand/finger gesture) are used in Indian Classical Dance.
- Asamyutha Hasta Sloka (Single hand gestures): Pathaaka, Tripathaako, Ardhapathaakah, Karthareemukhah, Mayooraasyo, Ardhachandrascha, Araalah, Shukathundakah, Mushtishcha, Sikharaakhyascha, Kapiththah, Katakaamukhah, Soochee, Chandrakalaa, Padmakosha, Sarpashirasthathaa, Mrgashirsha, Simhamukhah, Kangulascha, Alapadmakaha, Chathuro, Bhramarashchaiva, Hamsaasyo, Hamsapakshakaha, Sandamsho, Mukulaschaiva, Thamrachooda, Thrishoolakaha

Grade 2

Warm-Up Exercises

- Warm-up, mobilisers, balancing & stretching

Terminology

- *Angashuddham* - Refers to purity, clarity, and neatness of adavus and stance.
- *Sollukattu* - Rhythmic syllables

- *Nrittahastas* - Hand movements executed along with adavus solely for aesthetic beauty of embellishment are called nritta-hastas.
- *Natyarambham* – Hand position for beginning of dance

Adavus

- Tatta Adavu – Thaiya – Tai - striking the floor with sole of the feet (upto 8 varieties in 2 speeds)
- Kattu Adavu – Swastikam position (upto 3 varieties in 2 speeds)
- Mettu Adavu – Stamping with ball of foot (mettu position)
- Natta Adavu – Taiyum Tattat Taiyum Tam - stretching the leg and striking with heels (upto 8 varieties in 2 speeds)
- Paraval Adavu/Visharu Adavu – Thaa Thei Thei thaa Dhith thei thei thaa (upto 4 varieties in 2 speeds)
- Kudithu Mettu Adavu– Thei hath thei hi (upto 5 varieties in 2 speeds)
- Thatti mettu Adavu – Stamping in 5 different jaathis

Mudras

- Samyktha Hasta Sloka (Double hand gestures): Anjalishcha, Kapoashcha, Karkatah, Svasthikasthathaa, Dolahastah, Pushpaputaha, Uthsangah, Shivalingakaha, Katakaavardhanashchaiva, Karthareesvasthikasthathaa, Shakatam, Shanka, Chakrecha, Samputah, Paasha, Keelakau (Keelako), Mathsyah, Koormo, Varaashcha, Garudo, Naagabandhakaha, Khatvaa, Berundakaakeshcha, Avahithasthathatheivacha

Any short dance piece (around 3 minutes)

- Any slokas, Bajans, instrumental piece or any other appropriate music for classical dance can be used giving importance to adavus and mudras learned so far
- Nadai
- The basic Bharatanatyam walk which involves lifting the feet while slightly lowering the body. The feet are then placed down heel first and the body is raised back up.

Mandala Bhedas

Variations in feet positions

“Sthanakamcha Ayatham Aledam Prenkhana Prerithaneecha
Prathyaleedam Swasthikamcha motitham Samasoochika
Parshwasoochi Ticha dasha Manadala neeritha nee ha”

1. Sthaanakamcha - standing with feet together
2. Aayatham - sitting in Aramandi with feet turned sideways in straight line
3. Aaledam - sitting in Aramandi with feet in ‘L’ shape-RL pointing in front
4. Prenkhana - sitting with one leg stretched out on heel
5. Prerithaneecha - sitting with feet about 8-10 inches apart
6. Prathyaleedam - Aramandi with feet in ‘L’ shape- LL pointing in front
7. Swasthikamcha - L.foot turned and flat, R.foot behind on toes
8. Motitham - sit in muzhumandi and place one foot behind and drop knee
9. Samasoochika - drop both knees down while in muzhumandi
10. Parshvasoochi - one knee down and the other foot placed flat with knee lifted

GRADE 3

Rhythm and Tāla

- Recitation of śolkaṭṭu for aḍavus in three speeds.
- Recitation of śolkaṭṭu for the korvai with tāla.
- Knowledge of pancajāti and recitation to the appropriate eka tāla in two speeds.
- Knowledge of tāla and its angas (limited to ādi tāla and rūpaka tāla).

Aḍavus (in three speeds)

- Taṭṭu aḍavu – a minimum of seven varieties in ascending and descending tempo
- Śimir aḍavu – two varieties in tiśra jāti, using Ayatham and swasthikam position.
- jāru / sarikkal aḍavu – upto four varieties of tai ya tai yi using Sthanaka position
- Ettadavau – upto 6 varieties of thath thei thaam dhith thei thaam
- Uṭplavana/ Paichal Adavu – upto two varieties
- Mukṭāya / tirmāna aḍavu – ta dhin gi ṇa tom series.

Nritta

- A selection of aḍavus from the above section, in three speeds.
- A nritta composition based on a swara korvai displaying two speeds.
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Abhinaya / Nritya

A śloka should be performed as free verse only. Examples of ślokas that can be used - mūshika vāhana, śantākāram, yākundendu. The sāhitya of a simple gīta can also be used as free verse.

Creative Exercise

On instruction from the examiner, development of a narrative based on a sentence structure using mainly material from the Patāka hasta viniyoga śloka.

Theory

- Patāka hasta viniyoga - śloka or Sanskrit names.
- Knowing the words and meaning of the Shloka from Abhinaya/Nrithya section.
- Shiro Bhedhas(Head Movements), Dhristi Bhedhas (Eye Movements), Greeva Bhedhas (Neck Movements)

File Preparation

- All theory notes from Grade 1 -3 to be included – this can be printed and attached.
- Adavus with Solkattu and structure
- Notes on Origin of Bharatanatyam (upto 2 pages with pictures and illustrations)
- Dashavatar with pictures and illustrations.

GRADE 4

Rhythm and Tāla

- Recitation of śolkaṭṭu for aḍavus in trikāla and appropriate tāla in ascending and descending speeds.
- Understanding of tāla structure of the invocation and recitation of any nritta sections included in the invocation.

Aḍavus (in three speeds - below are some examples of aḍavus for each category.)

- Pakka aḍavu – five varieties of tat tai tā ha
- Tā hata jham tari tā
- Maṇḍi aḍavu - two combinations in which the muzhumaṇḍi position is used.
- Sarukkal aḍavu - in which the starting position is muzhumaṇḍi.
- Mei aḍavu - two varieties.
- Muktāya / tīrmāna aḍavu – ki ṭa ta ka dha ri ki ṭa tom series.

Nritta

- A selection of aḍavus from the above section.
- Kuraippu set to a suitable time cycle.

Abhinaya / Nritya

An invocatory item with both nritta and abhinaya, for example, Kavittuvam, Stuti, Vandana. It is mandatory that the abhinaya performed in this Grade is set to a time cycle as opposed to free verse.

Creative Exercise

The candidate will be expected to apply any jāti to any aḍavu as requested by the examiner. This task will be set as a sequence of consecutive aḍavus in varying jātis and / or speeds as opposed to just one jāti applied to one aḍavu in one speed.

Theory

Knowledge of sāhitya for the items learnt – words and meaning.

Knowledge of Pātraprāṇa with śloka as well as meaning.

Viniyogas of asamyuta hastas from tripatāka to Kartharimukha - śloka or Sanskrit names.

Sthānaka, utplavana, bhramari and cāri bhedas - ślokas or Sanskrit names.

File Preparation

- Notes on nritta, nritya and nāṭya.
- Notes on invocatory item from nritta section & adavus covered.
- Notes on three types of Abhinaya.
- Write about different classical dance forms of India – with pictures
- How did Lord Ganesha get his elephant head – with pictures and illustrations.
